



# NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

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## **Judiciary Mourns the Loss of Retired Superior Court Judge Tom C. Cole of Yuma**

PHOENIX – Former Superior Court Judge Tom C. Cole passed away on Thursday morning, January 23, 2014. Judge Cole was born on September 13, 1937, and apart from college and law school, lived his entire life in Yuma.

“Judge Cole dedicated his life to public service – to the courts and his community,” said Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice Rebecca White Berch. “He was the father of the drug court in Yuma County and always looked for ways to make the courts more efficient and the lives of those who came in touch with the courts better and more meaningful. His passing is a true loss for the court community. We will miss him.”

After graduating from Yuma High School in 1955 Judge Cole received a Bachelor of Science degree from Brigham Young University in 1960. Judge Cole was also an athlete and played on the varsity football team at both Yuma High and Brigham Young University. Judge Cole graduated from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law in 1963 and was admitted to the Arizona State Bar the same year.

Judge Cole’s legal career began as an associate attorney with the firm of Westover, Copple, Keddie and Choules, and he practiced there from 1966-1973. He subsequently practiced law as a partner with the firm of Rolle, Jones, Benton & Cole from 1973-1982. In 1982, Judge Cole started his own law practice and worked as a sole practitioner from 1982-1990, focusing primarily on civil litigation, although he also practiced occasionally in the areas of criminal law and family law.

Judge Cole was appointed to the office of Yuma County Superior Court Judge by former Governor Rose Mofford in January 1991. In 1997, Judge Cole was appointed as Presiding Judge by the Arizona Supreme Court, and he served in this capacity until he retired in 2007. Judge Cole proudly served the people of Yuma County in his role as a Superior Court Judge for over 16 years.

Judge Cole had a truly remarkable professional career, both as an attorney and a judge. He served as a Judge Pro Tem for the State of Arizona Court of Appeals. He also served in leadership roles for numerous judicial, legal, and community organizations, including: the Arizona Judges Association; the Yuma County Bar Association; the Arizona Bar Foundation; the Arizona Judicial College New Judge Orientation Conference and Planning Committee; the Yuma County Democratic Central Committee; the Arizona State Democratic Central Committee and the Diocesan Council for the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona.

Just weeks prior to his retirement, Judge Cole was honored by the Arizona Supreme Court with a Meritorious Service Award for “Serving the Community by Improving the Legal Community.”

Two of his proudest accomplishments as Presiding Judge were the creation of the Adult Drug Court in 1998 and the completion in 2005 of a new courthouse, the Yuma County Justice Center.

Faced with countless drug related crimes and the associated costs to both offenders and society, Judge Cole was the driving force to create an alternative to incarceration that would give drug-addicted offenders the opportunity to learn how to live a responsible drug-free life. He collaborated with Martin Krizay, who was the Yuma County Chief Adult Probation Officer at the time, to research and establish the Yuma Drug Court evidence-based program. This program has succeeded in its mission and received both local and national recognition.

Judge Cole’s work and dedication to Drug Court was so great that an award was created bearing his name. The Tom C. Cole Award is presented annually to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the community of persons in recovery in Yuma County. In 2004, Judge Cole was inducted into the “Drug Court Hall of Fame” of the Arizona Association of Drug Court Professionals and recognized for his leadership and service.

In a letter announcing his retirement, Judge Cole told of his gratitude for the opportunity to serve and the joy he felt when the family of adult drug court participants expressed thanks for giving them their parents and children back as clean, sober and responsible citizens.

Judge Cole's passing marks the end of an illustrious legal career of 44 years and a life of service to others. Services will be held February 1 at 3:00 p.m., at the United Methodist Church, located at 298 West Third Street in Yuma.

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**Note to Media: At the request of Judge Cole's wife, she has asked that she not be contacted about her husband's passing. I would respectfully ask that you honor her request and her respect her privacy in her time of grief.**